

15. O. T. OBITUARIES, WOMEN
564 S AD-BAK

THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER.

ON THE DEATH OF MISS LAURA W. AYER,
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE WEST HIGH SCHOOL.

A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, CLEVELAND,
SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1860.

RE-DELIVERED, BY REQUEST, BEFORE THE

Cleveland Teachers' Association,

JANUARY 26TH, 1861.

BY REV. J. A. THOME,

PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

CLEVELAND, O.

PRINTED BY FAIRBANKS, BENEDICT & CO., HERALD OFFICE.
1861.

THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER.

ON THE DEATH OF MISS LAURA W. AYER,

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE WEST HIGH SCHOOL.

A DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, CLEVELAND,

SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1860.

RE-DELIVERED, BY REQUEST, BEFORE THE

Cleveland Teachers' Association,

JANUARY 26TH, 1861.

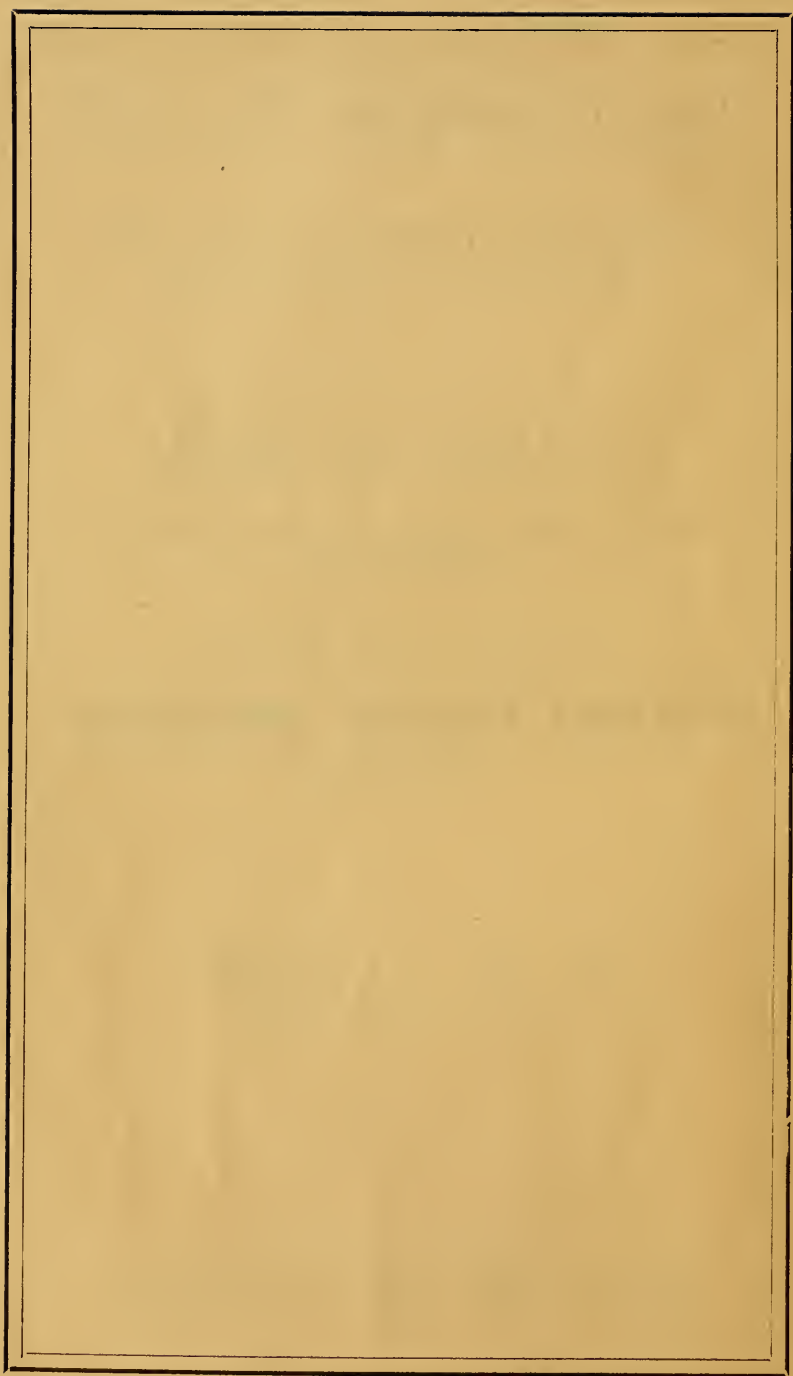
BY REV. J. A. THOME,

PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

CLEVELAND, O.

PRINTED BY FAIRBANKS, BENEDICT & CO., HERALD OFFICE.

1861.



DISCOURSE.

PSALM CXLIV—12.—“That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.”

The unusual sorrow occasioned throughout our community by the tidings of the sudden death of Miss LAURA W. AYER, has never found a suitable utterance. It was well, perhaps, that circumstances at the time, dictating a postponement, forbade the attempt.* It would have been a delicate and difficult task. I own that I shrank from it with unaffected diffidence. I was more than willing to let the first aspects of this afflictive dispensation pass by in solemn silence, in silence more expressive than speech.

It would now, after the lapse of weeks, be inappropriate to recall them; and it would be scarcely possible to reawaken the state of feeling they induced. It were useless to touch at this late day those finer chords which were the first to vibrate, and the first to be still, and which never answer to any hand but that of Death.

Time, the sovereign soother of sorrow-stricken hearts, the slow solver of sudden surprises, the gentle reconciler of the mind to irrecoverable losses, has been doing his healing work on our wounded sensibilities. The fatal wave that rolled over our young friend, and reached us with such a shock, now sleeps over her deep repose, and we, recovered somewhat from the shock, may now, with comparative calmness, think of Miss AYER as she was, of the work she did among us, of the character she illustrated. We may now, without fearing to do violence to the sensitive feelings of mourners, speak of our

* The decease of Miss A. occurred early in the vacation, shortly after she reached her home in New Hampshire. As many of the Teachers of the City Schools were then absent, the funeral was deferred to await their return, which made an interval of nearly two months.

sainted sister as one of the hallowed dead; and make that sacred use of her deathless example which is the privilege of survivors covetous of her mantle and her spirit. We resign in sadness but in submission her living form, since God has summoned away the vital spark; we yield up her spirit to Jesus in Paradise, and her remains to the grassy grave on the bank of the distant Connecticut; but the memory of her is ours inalienably, and her virtues are the enduring inheritance of our children.

It is as a Teacher we have known Miss AYER from first to last, a *Christian Teacher*. To us she has been as one without father and without mother, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; her life here has been rounded in four years of diligent service. She appeared among us in the prime of her womanhood, exhibiting manifold gifts and graces, all beautified by the priceless ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; she wrought as an earnest, self-sacrificing Teacher, occupying and magnifying the highest position to which a woman is eligible in our educational system; and having done her work, she went home, went to her kindred, sought the breezes of her native hills, looked once more on the loved scenes of her childhood, and—died!

The character our deceased sister bore among us, as we have said, is that of the CHRISTIAN TEACHER. Let this be our subject to-day; and let us strive to learn, in the light of this recent example, what manner of person a Christian Teacher ought to be; and how such an one ought to be esteemed by us for work's sake, and for personal worth. That the Lord calls and qualifies some to be teachers of youth, can hardly be doubted by a believer in Christianity. The Bible shows that the training of the young, dear as it is to the patriot, and doubly so the parent, is supremely dear to the Father in Heaven; and moreover that God's word and spirit alone can safely superintend this delicate process. We may consider David as speaking in the name and authority of God when, with the force, and fervor, and finish of inspiration, he sets forth in our text the consummation so devoutly to be wished of the Teacher's protracted toils and refining touches: "That

our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace."

If we would get the true measure of the Teacher's worth, we must look at his completed work, the educated man, the accomplished woman. Thousands will gaze to-morrow* on the unveiled attractions of the Monumental Statue of PERRY who may never see the person of the Artist; but every appreciative beholder of the marble Hero of the Lakes will think of Mr. WALCUTT with admiration, and render to him the meed of silent or outspoken praise. Hitherto this Artist has been little known, but henceforth, through this single production of his genius, he is destined to a national celebrity, and an enduring fame. The school room, like the *studio* of the sculptor, is a retired place, is the scene of unnoticed labors, and unwitnessed cares, and unnumbered trials, the material is rude, the process is sometimes necessarily rough, with chisels, and hammers, and chafings of sand-paper, to bring the native block into form, and carry it to the utmost point of finish; but when, in the fullness of time, we see the well-cultivated, promising young man, or the thoroughly trained and polished young lady, fitted alike for the sober duties of home, and for the refinements of rational society, we then perceive what the humble but gifted Educator, the true Artist of living subjects, has been patiently toiling through tedious years to accomplish. While statesmen are wishing for the prevalence of enlightened and upright citizens, while society demands virtues and graces in those who constitute it, while parents pray that their children may grow up with a development of all manly and womanly qualities, while all good people look to the rising generation with anxious expectation, linking with their character the future destinies of the country, the weight of the responsibility for the realization of these desires and hopes and prayers rests, under God, mainly on the Teacher, on the Christian Teacher, I would emphatically say, the *Christian Teacher*!

* The memorable 10th of September, when the Perry Monument was inaugurated in the presence of a hundred thousand people from various parts of the Union.

When we hear the pious King of Israel beseeching the Lord — “Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace,” we honor David for his dread and deprecation of a lawless, treacherous generation, and for his trust in God, who “giveth salvation unto Kings, and delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword,” that most hurtful sword of civil rebellion; but do we reflect that God’s chosen mode of effecting this deliverance is to train up a virtuous people through the agency of faithful Teachers? Let us bear this in mind. We might search the Bible through and fail to find a more truthful and beautiful picture of the results of right Education, than this our text presents, or one that more effectively magnifies the office of the Educator. With unmingled satisfaction and hopefulness we behold the bands of noble, well grown young men, upright as trees, and comely as strong; and the fair daughters of the land fitted to be the corner-stones of the social fabric, and by their essential polish, not their tinsel luster, gracing the completed structure with the elegance and splendor of a palace.

Our sons, and our daughters, too, exhibiting the evidence of thorough discipline and refining culture; both subjected to the same educational appliances in the same schools, under the same Teachers, but showing forth at last the admirable diversities of gifts and graces appropriate to their respective sexes and spheres. These cultivated sons and daughters appear in clearer light and more engaging aspect by the contrast with the strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood; children untutored, unsubdued, neglected; sons whose only training has been gotten in the streets and the haunts of corrupters; daughters whose principles, sentiments and tastes have had no auspices of molding hand, and model Presence; dissolute young men, and frivolous young women; — the dread and shame of the Commonwealth. Such a generation of strange children is the

pernicious consequence of a bad system of Education, or no Education. No social state can long endure this curse. How loudly does a free and christian country call for sons and daughters the opposite of these, just such as the text describes. And we cannot wonder at the prominence the Psalmist gives to a rightly trained generation, when we reflect on the consequences of neglected training.

Hence, too, and for still higher reasons, we are bound to take the widest view of the subject matter, and to understand that the spirit of inspiration in moving David to pray for well cultivated youth, extended his embrace to all the sons and daughters of Israel. So when we ask the endowments of wisdom for our sons and daughters, it behooves us to extend the wish to the whole rising generation, to the sons and daughters of the whole people. Every child in the State is entitled to the benefits of education. Not the safety and prosperity only of a Commonwealth, but its riches and its glory lie in its cultivated youth: they are its jewels as well as its corner-stones. Whatever else may be restricted, mental discipline and knowledge should not be. Wealth has its aristocracy, Fortune favors the few, Power and Honor are sparing of their gifts; of this we complain not; but we do protest against making Education the birthright of a class, or the monopoly of a sex! Learning, like liberty and life, is the sacred right of all the sons and daughters of the land. We must not think, in theory at least, of having one portion of our youth well trained, and another portion, one-half or one-third, excluded from the common schools, and left to grow up as strange children, and become the foes of the community. The best instruction practicable is due to every child — as a future citizen, whether we regard the citizen as a subject of the Government, or as a sovereign in the State. This is due to the safety and stability of the Commonwealth — that it may by this wise conservatism be effectually rid of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and violence, and cursing, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood, and fraud, and outrage. It is due, moreover to the child, as a rational and accountable being, the subject of a higher Government, and the heir of an endless

existence. Assuredly society is morally bound to treat man as the possessor of a soul, and to make suitable provision for the culture of the immortal part, for the polish of that priceless jewel. God holds nations responsible for the utmost educational appliances. He says to all rulers and legislators, "these children, the sons and the daughters of the people, are mine; it is my will, not merely that they should become good members of society, praiseworthy subjects of human government, but mainly that they should become obedient servants, and accepted sons, in my heavenly kingdom, established in all the nations of the earth." This undoubtedly is the purport of God's covenant with the kingdoms of men; and especially with our free Christian nation. He virtually charges our State authorities to furnish educational facilities so ample that all our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that all our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace, that in this only effectual way we may be quite rid and delivered from the hand of strange children.

This being the positive will of God, his imperious requirement, it is of course both the duty and the policy of this nation, and it should be in good faith carried out in every local community, in every school district, in every city ward.

We have not yet seen the whole of the psalmist's picture. Look again, and mark the breadth of outline, the boldness of points, and how the width of scope is made to heighten the effect of the main subject—an *educated generation*. Take the entire sketch, call it, if you please, the Sketch of a Happy People. After ascribing due honor to the Lord, who giveth salvation to kings, and praying to be delivered from strange children—a nation's calamity—the inspired artist portrays thus the elements of a happy people:—"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." This first, this paramount, standing out prominently in the fore ground! Then, "that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: that our oxen may be strong to labor: that there be no breaking in, nor going out: that

there be no complaining in our streets ! Happy is that people, that is in such a case ; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Is not this a striking picture of a thriving common wealth. Behold it, and learn that a nation that provides liberally for the cultivation of its youth, that aims chiefly to raise up generations of accomplished men and women, is sure of the favor of God, and will be prospered with the manifold blessings of his providence. Heaven grant that our nation, that our state, that our city, may fully learn this lesson of wisdom !

What, then, is the scriptural view of education ? It is broad, comprehending the interests of nations, and placing at the head of all secular interests, the care and nurture of the youth. It is impartial, requiring the instruction of both sons and daughters, giving to the latter every advantage provided for the former. It is universal, embracing all the children of the land, the high and the low, the rich and the poor together. And it is thorough, adapted to the development of every faculty in the finest symmetry. There is an arbitrary distinction made between a substantial education and a polite education ; and many advocates of popular education avow that the common school should aim only at the substantial, leaving refinement to be sought by those more fortunate youths who can afford to go to the college or the boarding school. Now there is indeed a fashionable standard of polite education, which we would not insist should be applied to our common schools. It is fictitious and pernicious. Its boasted accomplishments are tawdry shams. A young man cultivated after this standard is not like a stately tree on the breezy hill-side, but rather like a showy plant of the green-house. A young lady refined in this style is not like a corner-stone, polished after the similitude of a palace, but is rather like a specimen fossil, furbished and varnished for the cabinet of curiosities. There is another standard of refinement, our text reveals it ; it is refinement with substantiality ; it is that thoroughness which is the uncompromising opposite of partiality and of superficiality too. *Thoroughness*, the cultivation of the whole mind, of the heart as well as of the head, of the manners as

well as the memory, of the morals as well as the wits, of taste as well as tact, of sentiments and sensibilities, and whatever tends to soften the nature, and adorn the character. Indeed you can no more disjoin the refining efficacy of a sound education from its invigorating and expanding power, than you can separate the comeliness of a perfect tree from its strength, or the elegance of a finished palace from its solidity. That is properly no education which leaves its subject in the rough. Call not that the policy of the common school. It is an insult to the common people, an indignity to mind, an offence to God. Children may enter the school, crude and coarse, unblessed by the culture of good homes, corrupted even by the contaminations of bad neighborhoods, they may be never so vile and repulsive when they first step into the people's colleges; but from the moment they stand within those walls they are the privileged subjects of a thorough culture; the impartial genius of education takes them under her fostering care; they are diligently taught, and patiently borne with, through years of discipline. The light of learning is poured into their opening minds; precepts and principles are impressed on their susceptible hearts, models of manly worth and womanly dignity, are brought from all the past, and from the living present, to stimulate their noblest powers, and exalt their bosom purposes; and no pains are spared by the faithful educator to give stateliness of growth, to impart polish of soul, "that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

And now, my hearers, I soberly ask you, what do you think the teacher should be? Charged with such a work, entrusted by the State, by the people, and by the Lord, with this task of thorough training, what manner of person ought the teacher to be?

First of all, he ought to be himself a well cultivated man, that is, a man of good principles, of good scholarship, and of a good spirit; in love with his calling, in love with his pupils, having no respect of persons or families; hopeful of the results of right training; patient amid the daily hindrances and

drudgings of the school room, no wholesale striker, no brawler; not an incorrigible school-master, but rather a teacher, gracious and gentle, the minister of the little learners. He must be a patriot, and a statesman too; profoundly penetrated with his responsibilities as the former, the producer of future citizens, rulers, judges, and American matrons. He must be a philosopher, both mental and moral, that he may train up wayward children to be men of thought and action—lights in their day. He must be a true artist withal, that he may fashion his plastic pupils according to the best molds of human excellence, and give to their characters the finest polish of thorough cultivation. He should, by all means, be a decided, positive Christian—not a church member merely—but a real follower of Christ, a diligent student in the school of Christ, a man of daily prayer and living faith, walking in the light of God, and sustained by the grace of God in his arduous duties. How essential it is that the teacher be such a Christian, how essential to his own comfort, and to the completeness of his work. What a needful crown to all needful qualifications of the teacher. When we insist on this, we have not in mind that formal, austere religion, which petrifies the instructor into a statue of precision and severity. Put not such a Gorgon into the school room! We are thinking rather of a Christ-like form, divinely human, full of grace and truth—a light in the school-room, and a minister of love.

We have in view that picture, which the poet has drawn in these words:

“The Christian is the highest style of man.”

Such a man we would have the teacher be—a living model before the eyes of his pupils, stamping his own noble impress on their receptive hearts, by daily association.

When we consider that the educator is in reality the Lord's servant, employed to train up children in the way in which they should go, and held accountable to his Master, we cannot doubt that he ought to be a man of God. We must wonder that any one should aspire to the office of a teacher who does not fear the Lord—who is not a vital Christian. How can he

teach at all? How can he guide the froward, and govern the willful, and restrain the headstrong? How can he lead forward eager, progressive minds, furnishing for them safe incentives? How can he set before aspiring youths, worthy objects of pursuit? How can he inculcate true ideas of life and its issues? How can he be willing that the influence of his personal example as an ungodly man should be continually operating upon his numerous pupils? To whom can he resort for counsel and support? A servant of God *ex officio*, and yet not a servant of God *ex animo*, and not a son of God in the spirit. How can he hope that when his pupils are about to pass from his moulding hand he can present them to God, and say: "Here are thy sons, grown up as plants under my culture, and here are thy daughters well wrought as corner-stones, and polished after the similitude of a palace?"

Verily, verily, every teacher ought to be a Christian teacher. As the psalmist prays to be delivered from the hand of strange children, so may we devoutly pray to be delivered from the hand of the trainers of strange children.

We have been trying to set before you the Christian teacher. How can he be described in few words, so well as in those of our text, viz: he so teaches that, by means of his culture, our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace? Such a teacher, my hearers, is invaluable.

And here we turn, in closing this discourse, to say that she whose early decease we now lament, our esteemed sister, Laura W. Ayer, was truly a Christian teacher.

She had the spirit of a Christian; she had the qualifications of a teacher; and the Christian spirit she carried into the sphere of her school duties, whereby she gave grace to her life, and completeness to her labors.

We design no vague eulogy when we say that Miss Ayer was a Christian teacher. There are teachers who are not Christians, and there are Christians in name who are none the better teachers for that. It was as a follower of Christ that our sister taught and toiled—with tears. Her heart was fully in her work, and her work was her Father's

business. In the school room, amid her pupils, she walked with God, going thither, and returning thence daily, in prayerful reliance on her Lord. Before her classes she appeared not only as the scholar and the lady, but as a woman professing Godliness. She was more than a routine teacher; she was a faithful counsellor, a steadfast guardian, a bright exemplar. She gave not her time only, but herself also, her very life, willing to spend and be spent in her chosen service. Her work was never done. When the school hours had expired she met her pupils collectively for prayer, or personally for religious conversation. When the daylight was past, she sought the chamber of sickness, and denied herself necessary sleep, to minister comfort to the languishing, and hope to the dying. How often has she proffered to parched lips the cup of cold water, in the name of a disciple! How many afflicted homes can bear tearful testimony to her tender ministries! Yea, if she was a devoted teacher, she was a Christian woman as well, true to the relations of common life. Not satisfied with the arduous labors of daily instruction, she taught in the Sabbath school, and was ever at her post, imparting Bible knowledge and Christian influence to the scholars whom she had herself brought into school, and who deeply mourn her departure from them.

She was an active and exemplary church member, a warm sympathizer with her pastor, and a ready promoter of every good enterprise. Characteristically retiring, she was conscientiously prompt to the call of duty; yet few knew well her inner life. Those who were favored with her intimacy, perceived her purity of heart, and her manifold graces of spirit; and these most prized her rare endowments for the educational post she occupied.

Possessed herself of substantial acquirements, and also of that refinement which is of the heart, she was eminently fitted to superintend the highest stage of training, and to give to all the preceding discipline and culture the touches of a finishing hand, and best of all, the polish of a saintly spirit.

Yet how unpretentious withal! She, the least of all the teachers, in her own estimation! How she would shrink from

these terms of commendation, were she living! But what fellow teacher would abate a jot from them? Aye, and what pupil of her's would detract aught from this meed of praise?

We need say no more. We can only hold up the example, the labors and the successes of this deceased teacher, to the consideration of those who survive her in this sphere of service.

We can assure the teachers of our public schools, both male and female, that it is in their power to secure a warm place in the grateful hearts of the parents of their pupils, and to be in high esteem for their work's sake, and for their personal worth. Let them be Christian gentlemen and ladies, faithful in service, illumining their spheres with the gifts of culture, and the graces of piety, at the same time shining, as becomes them, in the broader sphere of social and religious life, and they will be honored and loved; and should untimely death remove them from their posts, their loss will be lamented as a public calamity, while their memories will be cherished in the bosoms of the families they have cheered by their presence, and blessed by their labors in the school room.

The Christian teacher need not covet any nobler field of usefulness, any worthier work. The only promotion he should think of is that which the devoted Miss Ayer has received—exaltation to the skies.

May every one of our teachers, through faith and fidelity, at length obtain a crown of life, and may each crown be gemmed with a multitude of pupils trained for Christ. Amen!

THE CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY
14 BEACON STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02108